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NEW THEATRE MAGAZINE

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Foreword

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SIR RALPH RICHARDSON

It is a truism that repertory is the life-blood of theatre in this country. Of our repertory theatres, the majority are to be found in university towns, where drama is inevitably one of the major cultural interests of the undergraduate population. The audience-potential of the universities to repertory is therefore high and the audience provided is likely to be an instructed one—such an audience, in fact, as progressive repertory most cherishes. Here, then, is an immediate point of contact between the universities and the professional stage: the provision to repertory of constant and enlightened patronage by the universities—their staff, undergraduates and their friends—thus ensuring permanent financial support, however marginal, to the repertories. These, I know, reciprocate by offering a high standard of professional presentation against which the undergraduates can assess their own productions.

Can this connection be extended with profit to both sides? I think it can.

Theatre managements, I suggest, might well consider granting price concessions to students: this is regularly done on the continent and is already the custom in one or two of our own theatres. Visiting notabilities of the theatre might also be invited to address university drama groups —who will, I am sure, find theatre people much more approachable and much less jealous of their leisure time than is generally supposed! The directors of repertory theatres would also most likely be willing to speak to university audiences on their current productions and regular programmes of talks and discussions could thus be arranged.

I always feel it something of an anomaly that so little truly professional advice is available within universities on the subject of drama. It would, after all, hardly be considered adequate if the training of doctors were entrusted to lecturers who had never operated on or dosed a patient in their entire lives! Why, then, should university drama so often be dealt with in a sort of academic vacuum?

Certainly, where university dramatic societies are concerned, I feel that sooner or later professional direction of some kind must be looked for. How otherwise can these societies ensure that continuity of artistic policy without which a consistently high standard of production cannot be either established or maintained?

I find it gratifying that any group of young men and women should decide to reassess their position, critically, *vis-à-vis* the drama. It is especially gratifying when these are undergraduates—as in the present case—and when they are turning their minds towards active co-operation, within the community, with the repertory stage. I wish them and their magazine well, and commend it to my many friends in repertory.

Trumpet Voluntary

THE EDITORS

WHEN the proposed new Nottingham Playhouse has been built, a prototype machine will exist for transforming into reality the concept of community theatre foreshadowed in the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, and in Sam Wanamaker's venture at the New Shakespeare Theatre, Liverpool.

How and why the new Nottingham Playhouse will come into being, Hugh Willatt describes elsewhere in this magazine. In it the two streams of community theatre and technical innovation will meet. Thus, from a provincial civic venture a theatre will emerge in intimate, everyday relationship with the community it serves. In London such an intimacy is virtually impossible. London is a clearing-house given over to a routine of migratory living, and it must always tend to deny to the playwright, actor, audience and producer alike any real continuity of shared experience.

The new Nottingham Playhouse, then, points a road into the future; and it points away from London. It will stand at the head of a line of post-war provincial theatre-building heralded in 1951 by the construction of the Drama Studio at the University of Bristol and continued in the new theatres at Coventry and Middlesbrough. The Nottingham Playhouse will cost some £200,000, and it will not be the last provincial playhouse of its kind. The Provinces are astir, and Bernard Miles's valiant solo—alas!—sounds a lonely note, in descant to London's loss of the Stoll and the St. James's, against the swelling cadences of the provincial brass.

One of the most vital yet invisible functions of the provincial "rep." is the provision of both a nucleus and a spearhead for the theatre. Repertory must become conscious of itself as a repository of technical accomplishment and as an agent of attack upon the aesthetic and civic sensibilities of townsfolk.

"In Nottingham," says Hugh Willatt, "it happened like this. The *raison d'être* was, of course, the ten years' work of the existing Nottingham Playhouse. . . ."

"In Bristol," says Glynne Wickham, "it happened like this: there could have been no Department of Drama without the prior creation of the Old Vic Company and School. . . ."

The Universities have this much at least in common with the Theatre: they, too, are an essential part of the community. The battle of Town and Gown today produces little more noise than a resounding tinkle. On both sides, new men look to the future; and they seek a growing co-operation between the Theatre, the Schools, the Universities and the communities of which these are all integral parts.

NEW THEATRE MAGAZINE is the Universities' salute to this new spirit in the Repertory Theatre.

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The Labour Party and the Provincial Theatre

Rt. Hon. W. GLENVIL HALL, M.P.

THE provincial theatre has suffered a severe reverse since the turn of the century. In the past fifty years, five out of every seven provincial theatres have closed down, while touring companies have dwindled to little more than faint shadows of their former selves.

It is assumed by some that the shutting-down of so many playhouses and the permanent loss of a number of central sites in cities and towns have done irreparable harm to the theatre. I do not altogether share this view. The majority of these buildings were hopelessly out of date, uneconomic to run, and often uninviting beside the plush and glossy cinema across the street.

Their disappearance therefore solves the problem—which would otherwise arise—of what to do with them. For you cannot "make do and mend" with a structure that is no longer there, or wax sentimental about keeping the Old Grand going when it has already gone!

The reasons for the decline of the provincial theatre are well-known. It has not, happily, been due to any real lack of interest on the part of ordinary men and women in drama. The decline springs from a variety of causes: the dearth of capital, the rising costs of production and repairs, the value of sites for other purposes, the competition of the cinema and television—but not, surely, from lack of interest on the part of the public.

The interest of the public in both plays and players is as lively today as ever it was. For the entertainment both the cinema and television offer is based on the living theatre and stems from the same source. And, this being so, it inevitably follows that if the living theatre is allowed to wither and die, both the cinema and television must suffer.

If, broadly speaking, the provincial theatre has ceased to be a sufficiently profitable enterprise to attract the private owner or syndicate, it becomes plain that if it is to survive othef sources of support must be found. Private patronage, by individuals and firms, can or course be of great assistance here, but in the nature of things this kind of help—though exceedingly welcome—cannot be enough. Something more permanent is necessary. The community as an entity should itself take a hand, through its Town Council, and should make it a matter of civic pride to support its own local theatre in much the same way as music and the drama are supported in many continental centres.

An example of how these two—the individual patron and the civic authority—can co-operate is to be found in Nottingham. Here, as a result of money from a legacy, a donation from a local business organization, and very substantial help from the City Council, a new theatre is to be built that will be noteworthy by any standards, and additional premises are to be acquired for use as workshops. The Belgrade Theatre in Coventry is another example of civic effort wholeheartedly backed by local voluntary support.

The public attitude to the arts in this country has lagged woefully behind that of the rest of Europe. We have for many decades now cheerfully supported free libraries to the tune of many millions yearly, but only recently have we as a nation come to realize that we have an obligation also to help opera, ballet, and the drama in the same way.

Since the war, Parliament has recognized this fact in three ways:

(1) by the allocation of grants through the Arts Council;

(2) by agreeing to build and equip a National Theatre; and

(3) by providing in the Local Government Act, 1948, the power for local authorities to spend the proceeds of up to a sixpenny rate (together with any receipts that may accrue) on subsidizing and running a municipal theatre, concerts, plays and other entertainment.

In 1958, the Arts Council out of its allocation from the Treasury made grants of about £70,000 to theatres, most of this going to some thirty repertory companies in various towns and cities, including London. Assistance of this kind would itself justify the existence of the Council if justification were needed. It has, however, to be confessed that useful though the grants are, they are not very large in the light of the need, and are of necessity selective.

It is clear that the work of the Arts Council in this direction should be expanded and direct assistance given to a greater number of areas. This obviously means that Parliament must increase the total sum placed at the disposal of the Council and I am quite sure that the House of Commons will do so in due course no matter what Government is in power. At the time of writing, however, the Labour Party is the only one to have announced what it intends to do should it be returned to Office at the next election.

It intends to increase the Exchequer grant towards the maintenance of the Arts from its present figure of £1,218,000 to a sum of not less than £3,000,000 a year. And it is calculated that with a grant of this size it should be possible at present price levels to initiate over the years a programme of building and modernization of theatres and concert halls.

The details of just how this will be done have, naturally, still to be worked out. I think, however, that the pattern for the provinces may well conform more or less to the following priorities:

(*a*) the provision of new theatres to be run on a community basis (as at Coventry and soon at Nottingham);

(*b*) special aid to key repertory companies to enable them to extend their activities;

(*c*) a planned programme, based in the main on the National Theatre Units, designed to take the drama to those areas unable for one reason or another to sustain a repertory company of their own.

The chief difficulty in implementing or modifying this programme is the lack of knowledge of local conditions in the provinces, and what is obviously needed, at an early stage, is that this deficiency shall be made good. Steps should likewise be taken to arrange a gathering of repertory directors and managers, together with Members of Parliament and others interested, for the interchange of information and discussion of the problems, technical and general, that arise in the day to day running of our playhouses. This meeting should be called together by the Arts Council and if successful—as it most surely would be—should become a yearly event and might be held in turn in the larger centres of population. Only in this way can ideas be exchanged and examined and, if found sound, adopted elsewhere.

What of the National Theatre?

For over half a century, attempts have been made to get such a centre built in London, the capital of the Commonwealth, as a memorial to William Shakespeare, the greatest dramatist the world has known.

Although everybody has agreed that such a memorial is highly desirable, little came of these attempts up to 1949 beyond the raising of about £150,000 and the purchase of a site in South Kensington with part of it. And it is likely that nothing more would have been done even then if the London County Council had not offered to exchange an area of about an acre on the South Bank, Westminster, for the South Kensington property—provided it could be assured that funds would be forthcoming within a reasonable period of time for the erection thereon of the memorial.

It was in these almost accidental circumstances that the Government of the day agreed to allocate from public monies a sum of up to

£1,000,000 towards the project, and an Act was passed in the spring of 1949 to give legislative effect to the undertaking.

All this happened over ten years ago now, but apart from the foundation stone laid by Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother in 1950, no attempt has been made to start building. Although plans have been drawn and approved by the Fine Arts Council for the erection of a structure worthy both of Shakespeare and of the country that gave him birth, nothing more has been done. These plans envisaged two theatres within the structure, one capable of holding 1,200 and one 500 people, together with other accommodation adequate to house the staff and equipment necessary in such a centre.

This omission is a great pity. Although London is well supplied with theatres, including the Old Vic, none of them—not even the Old Vic—can occupy the place it is hoped a really National Theatre would fill. The centre would not only incorporate the best of the innovations embodied in theatres built since the war, but it would form a lively and stimulating base for the interchange of both plays and players between London and the provinces. It would also, whilst never forgetting the old dramatists, be ever on the look-out for new playwrights and anxious to give them their chance. For these reasons the Labour Party believes that work on the project should begin at the earliest moment and intends, should it be returned to power, to implement the 1949 Act without delay.

Both the coming into existence of the National Theatre and the active help of the Arts Council are thus of great importance to the provincial theatre. Of even greater importance to its future, however, is undoubtedly the power conferred on municipalities by the Local Government Act, 1948, which enables them to finance the drama out of the rates. Imaginatively used, this provision is capable of transforming the situation over a relatively short period of time in almost any town, and it is most disappointing that although it has been on the Statute Book for ten years only a limited number of local authorities use the powers thus conferred, and of those who do few (if any) spend more than a penny rate.

The blame for this rests, of course, almost entirely on the shoulders of those actively interested in the drama. They may be, and often are a small minority, but unless they themselves make it their business to mobilize opinion it is unlikely that either members of the local council or their fellow citizens will do anything. In this connection, they should be enheartened to note that in places where civic pride has been aroused and much done to help the local repertory movement, the initiative came in the first place from a mere handful of enthusiasts.

Effort of this kind should not however end with persuading the local authority to take action. This is not enough, though necessary if substantial and permanent financial backing is to be got for the running of an up-to-date playhouse. For success, it is also necessary that as many individuals as possible, drawn from every section of the community, should be enrolled as subscribing supporters. Only in this way can the venture be truly a community one and widespread interest sustained.

In an age when the hours of work have become fewer and, with the growth of labour-saving devices, are likely to become fewer still, the problem of the use of leisure is increasingly occupying the thoughts of thinking men and women. They are perturbed by our tendency to become watchers rather than active participants, sitters rather than doers, whether we are interested in sport or in some other form of mass entertainment. Things of the mind and spirit seem to be at a discount.

In this situation any group that strives to bring an appreciation of the arts into everyday life is to be encouraged. For this reason, if for no other, I for one, welcome the efforts now being made to spread love of the drama in this country.

W. GLENVIL HALL.

An article supplied by the Conservative Central Office on this subject will appear in our next issue.

American Colleges and Universities and the Professional Theatre

Professor GEORGE SAVAGE

[PROFESSOR GEORGE SAVAGE. Senior Fulbright Lecturer in Drama, 1958–1959, Drama Department, University of Bristol; Professor of Theatre Arts, University of Califonia at Los Angeles.]

Q. Do American colleges and universities influence the professional theatre?

A. Yes.

Q. Are you sure?

A. Absolutely.

Q. What is the basis for your absolute certainty?

A. Statistics.

Q. I suspected we'd arrive eventually at this typically American approach to all problems but I didn't anticipate statistics so early in our discussion. (With a slight distension of the left nostril.) What statistics?

A. There are 1863 colleges and universities in the United States. All of these "institutions of higher learning" award academic degrees. Every student must have completed a high school course in an institution, similar to an English secondary comprehensive school, in which he has selected a college preparatory course.

Q. There are more than twice as many colleges and universities as there were students in the University of Bristol preceding World War II. How many students attend these institutions?

A. In 1957:

8,952,000 persons in the United States had attended a college or university for from one to three years;

7,637,000 had attended four years or more;

16,587,000 individuals in America have been exposed to advanced learning.

This is almost 10 per cent of the population.

Q. What is the current college and university population?

A. In 1957, 3,068,000 students were in resident enrollment. This is about 1·7 per cent of the total population for that year.

Q. How do these statistics apply to the influence of American colleges and universities on the professional theatre?

A. It is inevitable that all phases of American life will reflect college and university influence. Every year college and university trained personnel enter the professional theatre.

Q. I grant that the professional theatre will reflect this movement quantitatively. You haven't discussed this influence qualitatively.

A. Why don't you ask me if this doesn't result in the quality of the student wearing rather thin?

Q. Doesn't education for everyone result in learning for no one?

A. Before I admit there are defects in a system that makes it possible for everyone who wishes to attend a college and university and before you concede that English universities should liberalize their curriculum and expand their numbers, there should be an explanation of the kind of training in theatre open to the American student.

Q. I hear rather disturbing accounts of the vocational, practical aspects of American higher education. What is this theatre training?

A. Almost every college and university will have on its academic staff, one teacher whose responsibility will be to direct (produce) plays. He will have, at the minimum, courses in acting and production for which credit will be given toward graduation. Even the technical college will have dramatic activity, though participation may be voluntary and not a part of course work. Large private and public universities will have perhaps, a theatre staff of 60, with a student

undergraduate enrollment of 600-700, and a graduate school of 100-150.

Q. Statistics! What of the training?

A. In a typical large Department of Theatre Arts, there will be courses in voice training, beginning and advanced acting, directing, design, costuming, workshop, lighting, playwriting, as well as in aesthetics, history of the theatre, dramatic literature, dramatic criticism, and research. The University of Washington in Seattle, Washington will produce twenty-five full length plays each year. These will include classics, two original scripts, two musicals, three children's plays. They will also stage three operas for the School of Music. The School of Drama operates three well-equipped theatres on a year-around basis. At the University of California at Los Angeles every student must participate during his four years at least once in every technical phase of production.

Q. A man works on costume, wardrobe?

A. Yes.

Q. And make-up?

A. Yes.

Q. A girl in a workshop? Sawing, hammering, painting flats?

A. Yes.

Q. When do they study?

A. This is a part of their university studies—their laboratory work.

Q. Does the student read in any other subject?

A. The American system is completely different from the English approach. Students enroll for many different subjects. A credit is usually one class meeting with two hours of study per week for sixteen weeks. A course may earn from one to five credits. A student will be enrolled for fifteen or sixteen credits (units) each semester. At the end of the sixteen weeks, he is examined in each subject he has selected for that semester and is given a grade. It is the average of these grades that indicate his academic status. There is no undergraduate tutorial system, although the equivalent obtains in the graduate (in England called post-graduate) work.

Q. How does the student earn a degree?

A. He must make a required grade average in 120 units, usually spread over four or more years, not including summer school. Only about forty units (credits) or about one-third of his work may be in drama. The rest must be selected in a pattern including language, science, history, social science, English, philosophy, humanities, the arts. He will be required to take a variety of courses over many fields of knowledge. He reads, then, to some extent, in a great many subjects. He concentrates on only one. In drama, he will have no choice but to study many subjects beyond his major interest which may be playwriting, acting, design, technical work, dramatic literature criticism.

Q. Four years for a degree?

A. Yes.

Q. Are there really vast post-graduate departments?

A. One hundred and seven institutions award Master's degrees in theatre; that is one or two years' work after the bachelor's degree. The student may do a research or critical thesis. In some schools, he may write a play. He may also direct or design a show or reach a certain standard in acting or do a production book (a complete plan for a production). Eighteen universities award a Ph.D. in theatre. This degree usually represents two to four years beyond the Master's degree and includes a dissertation that should be a contribution to knowledge. A few schools will grant a Ph.D. for original plays of unusual creative accomplishment.

Q. Do many students continue their education from two to six years beyond the B.A. degree?

A. In 1956, in all areas of study, 59,440 master's degrees and 8,903 doctor's degrees were awarded. In 1958 97 doctoral projects in progress in theatre arts were listed in the

Educational Theatre Journal under these headings: I Dramatic Periods, Dramatic Types, Techniques and Dramaturgy, Dramatic Theorists, Dramatic Critics; II The Theatre as a Means of Communication: Directing, Acting, Design, Construction, Lighting, Costume, Music, Dance, Architecture, Administration, Playwriting, Translations, Production; III Theatre in Its Social Functions: The Religious Theatre, the Political Theatre, the Educational Theatre, the Therapeutic Theatre, the Children's Theatre, the Commercial Theatre, the Community Theatre, the International Theatre. IV Related Media: Motion Pictures, Radio, Television.

Q. Do *all* these students with *all* this advanced training hope to enter the professional theatre?

A. No. Many intend from the beginning of their college work to enter college, university, or secondary school teaching. Others have employment by the community theatre in mind. There are no paid actors in community theatres but the directors, technicians, and often the business management draw salaries. Some consider the theatre as a degree valuable for its cultural and intellectual values and have no intention of turning it to practical use. Others will want a degree in drama but will go into business and industry upon graduation. They consider theatre an avocation in which they will indulge themselves through voluntary and leisure time participation in community and amateur theatricals. Others will go into children's theatre as directors (producers) and teachers. Where there is no radio, motion picture, or television course, students will consider drama as a substitute. The American Educational Theatre Association is both the title and description of an organization with 3,900 members, 23 projects, and any number of committees.

Q. You stated that the educational theatre influenced the professional theatre. Doesn't any of this multitude go into the professional theatre?

A. First, what do you mean by professional theatre?

Q. You're asking me?

A. Yes.

Q. Human beings in a theatre on a stage before an audience acting out a play and everyone being paid for his services. There are about seventy repertory companies in England and about fifty theatres in London. How many such opportunities are there in America?

A. New York is the basic professional theatre. There are a few professional companies outside New York City but not many. There is an active summer stock programme, particularly in New England.

On 30th November, 1958, there were 33 Broadway theatres lighted. There can be as many off Broadway theatres and productions. The off-Broadway theatre is small, the actors are usually paid Equity minimum, and the opportunities for production profit are slight. Off-Broadway will do more classics, foreign plays, revivals, and experimental productions, if not many new plays. On 30th November, 1957, for example, there were twenty off-Broadway theatres although the number fluctuates. On an off-Broadway, about forty-five new plays are done each year. Since some of these shows run only a few days, there is a very limited opportunity for the annual crop of college graduates.

Q. Any student who wishes to enter the professional theatre after his four-year academic course is living in a dream world, a fantasy.

A. No, that is not true.

Q. But the facts speak for themselves.

A. Except for this one point. The definition of the professional theatre.

Q. We agreed that the professional theatre consisted of human beings on a stage acting out——

A. That was your definition.

Q. What's yours?

A. The professional theatre, in the contemporary theatre world, should encompass radio, television, motion pictures, and the legitimate theatre.

Q. Why?

A. Because radio, television, and motion pictures are completely and undeniably interrelated with the living theatre. There is almost no successful actor who hasn't worked in all four media. And this holds for designers, writers, directors, technicians, costumers. In fact the biographies of anyone in any aspect in the contemporary theatre (large sense) will include all the media. And particularly since the late thirties, the biography will more times than not include a college affiliation, a community theatre experience, a few seasons in summer stock, radio, television, motion pictures, and a play on Broadway. Rarely, if ever, is the actor trained only within the legitimate theatre and appears only in the legitimate theatre. The older actors may not follow this pattern; the younger ones do.

Q. What about the professional schools?

A. The influence of the professional theatre school is important. The American Academy of Dramatic Arts, Actors' Studio (The Method), and probably ten other good professional schools in New York City and another twenty throughout the country will contribute to an actor's training. Sometimes, the student will combine college and the professional school. Often he will enter the professional school directly on the theory that he will be old and wrinkled after a four-year college course but young and vigorous after only one or two years in a professional school. Perhaps all an actor should know is acting which is the primary emphasis of the professional school.

There are also actors who have never had any contact with colleges and university, professional schools, or private coaches. This group, however, is a minority numerically among the younger performers.

Q. The B.B.C. (radio and television) and I.T.V. absorb only a limited number each year. How many do these media employ in America?

A. In the United States there are:

548 individual television stations broadcasting from ten to twenty hours daily.

51,000,000 television receiving sets. (85 per cent of all American homes have television sets; 7 per cent have two or more sets.)

3,400 standard radio broadcasting stations transmitting from ten to twenty-four hours a day.

150,000,000 radio sets (car, portable, transistor as well as standard).

Motion pictures last year showed a profit again by making spectaculars and by producing television film programmes or releasing film rights to television.

The college graduate may dream of the living theatre but there is an enormous demand and opportunity in these other media. There are, or course, more applicants than there are positions but the way in which television in particular absorbs personnel and scripts makes the theatre (large sense) widely available. In a sense, the legitimate theatre in America is subsidized by the other three media in personnel, in scripts and in financial support.

Q. If the college student considers any form of public appearance theatre (large sense), is there considerable opportunity for him?

A. Yes.

Q. I suppose you have statistics.

A. Yes. Some I made up myself.

Q. And the others you didn't?

A. In this instance, I asked Bob Barrows, a playwright living in New York, to send me twelve programmes selected at random. I suspect this means shows for which he received passes. I have summarized the information in the biographies of actors printed in the elaborate programmes that are

magazines in format and content. These are distributed without charge to patrons because the considerable advertizing carries the publication cost. Except for the information on each play, the programme copy changes each week. The college and university or professional school will not always be mentioned. Nevertheless this seems to me to strike an average.

Of 183 biographies of actors listed in twelve programmes:

57 per cent made no mention of college background. Several child actors and old timers who preceded the days of drama departments and mass advanced education were in the cast. Thirteen actors were from foreign countries.

43 per cent mention a college background. This included three with Master's degrees and one Ph.D. candidate.

50 different colleges and universities were designated, including six foreign universities.

80 per cent listed radio and/or television and/or motion picture credits.

Q. But what is the influence of colleges and universities?

A. Most of those entering the four media will have been to a college or university for a year or more. Of these, probably ninety per cent will have taken courses in drama.

Q. Does that necessarily result in higher standards of production, better selection of scripts, finer acting, greater security, and more mutual respect in theatre relationships?

A. Does going to a university improve the mind, the moral discipline, the creative capacity, the intellectual integrity of the student? Shouldn't everyone have the opportunity for artistic awakening and cultural growth? Why not an enlightened general public. Is education for the privileged few?

Q. Mass education neglects the talented and the gifted.

A. Perhaps American education does need more concentration on learning and less on education.

Q. Perhaps the English universities should liberalize their curriculum and open their doors to more students.

A. I said this would happen.

Q. Why has education taken this direction in America?

A. Everyone is entitled to a college education. State supported universities, therefore, respond to the needs and wishes of the people who by paying taxes finance the schools and colleges. If students want drama, they will have drama.

Q. But this great complex of radio, motion picture, television, educational theatre, children's theatre, community theatre, musical theatre, legitimate theatre—the expansion of theatre (large sense) . . . why?

A. America responds to social and economic pressures. When it is profitable to sponsor television advertizing, there will be television production. As long as there's the prospect of profit, there will be competitive expansion and development.

Q. Is the theatre a business or an art?

A. Both.

Q. Is it hopelessly imitative?

A. Yes.

Q. Is it rebellious and challenging?

A. Yes.

Q. Is everything I can think to say about the American theatre true?

A. Yes.

Q. What about standards, quality, literary value?

A. America has every kind of production to fit every taste. In the American theatre (large sense), you can find what you want, but you will have to work at it; you'll have to search it out.

Q. Thank you very much, but I must leave now.

A. Don't tell me—*I Love Lucy.*

Q. No, *Wagon Train.* And you?

A. *Third Programme.*

The New Nottingham Playhouse

HUGH WILLATT

[HUGH WILLATT. Member of the Arts Council of Great Britain and of its Drama Panel; Vice-Chairman of the Board of Directors, Nottingham Playhouse.]

IN January, 1958, the Nottingham City Council, after a long debate, decided to spend up to £200,000 on the building of a new theatre to house the work of the Nottingham Playhouse. The debate differed a good deal in tone from the sweet reasonableness on all sides when the House of Commons made its famous decision that £1,000,000 be spent on a National Theatre. In fact, the Nottingham Council divided on strictly party lines and a good deal of scorn was poured from the Conservative benches on this extravagant proposal, a mixture of half-baked idealism and bad business, reckless and feckless, always with the proviso that there was no opposition to such things in principle but that the need could be met by, for instance, a converted cinema, or a building on the lines of the Birmingham Amateur Theatre Centre which cost less than £10,000. The fact remains that the National Theatre is still a slab of stone removed from site to site, while the Nottingham scheme is undoubtedly going ahead.

It was an important decision in the history of the English Theatre—how important has not yet perhaps been fully realized. This will be the third English theatre to be built since the war for professional use, and two of these will have been buildings provided wholly from public money. The recognition that a theatre building is something on which substantial money can be spent from public funds, that it should be given a place of importance in the life of a provincial city, is a change of outlook indeed.

It would be encouraging to be able to say that the Nottingham decision came about as a result of a vociferous demand from the citizens bombarding their representatives in the Council with requests that the housing of their loved Repertory Theatre be given proper attention. Help for the arts, as Shaw pointed out, has never come about that way and probably never will. The art galleries and museums and concert halls which have hitherto been considered proper objects of public provision have grown from the efforts of the enthusiastic few, but they have become accepted by the many, and their sudden disappearance would be quite fiercely resented. The important thing is the coming of theatres into that category.

In Nottingham it happened like this. The *raison d'être* was, of course, the ten years' work of the existing Nottingham Playhouse and in turn this theatre, when it opened in 1948, had roots which went quite deep into the life of the town. The present Playhouse sprung from a demand. There had, of course, since 1865, been the Theatre Royal, with its fifteen hundred seats and its gilt and plush and cherubs and all the charm of the period. Its predecessors went back into the eighteenth century. But the Royal, in common with its kind in all the other big cities, is now owned by one of the combines based on London. Like them it houses musicals, pantomimes, try-outs and the few stars who still go beyond London and the two or three very big cities. It fulfils an extremely important function and its loss would be catastrophic. But was this enough? Nottingham, for a few years in the early nineteen twenties, had had a repertory theatre also, started on quite a lavish scale by the late Mrs. Edward Compton in a large building away from the centre of the city, on the same lines as the still new repertory theatres at Birmingham and Liverpool. It died, while they kept alive, but the loss was felt. Many people middle-aged in 1948, had remembered in the years between that this theatre had meant a surprising amount to them when they were

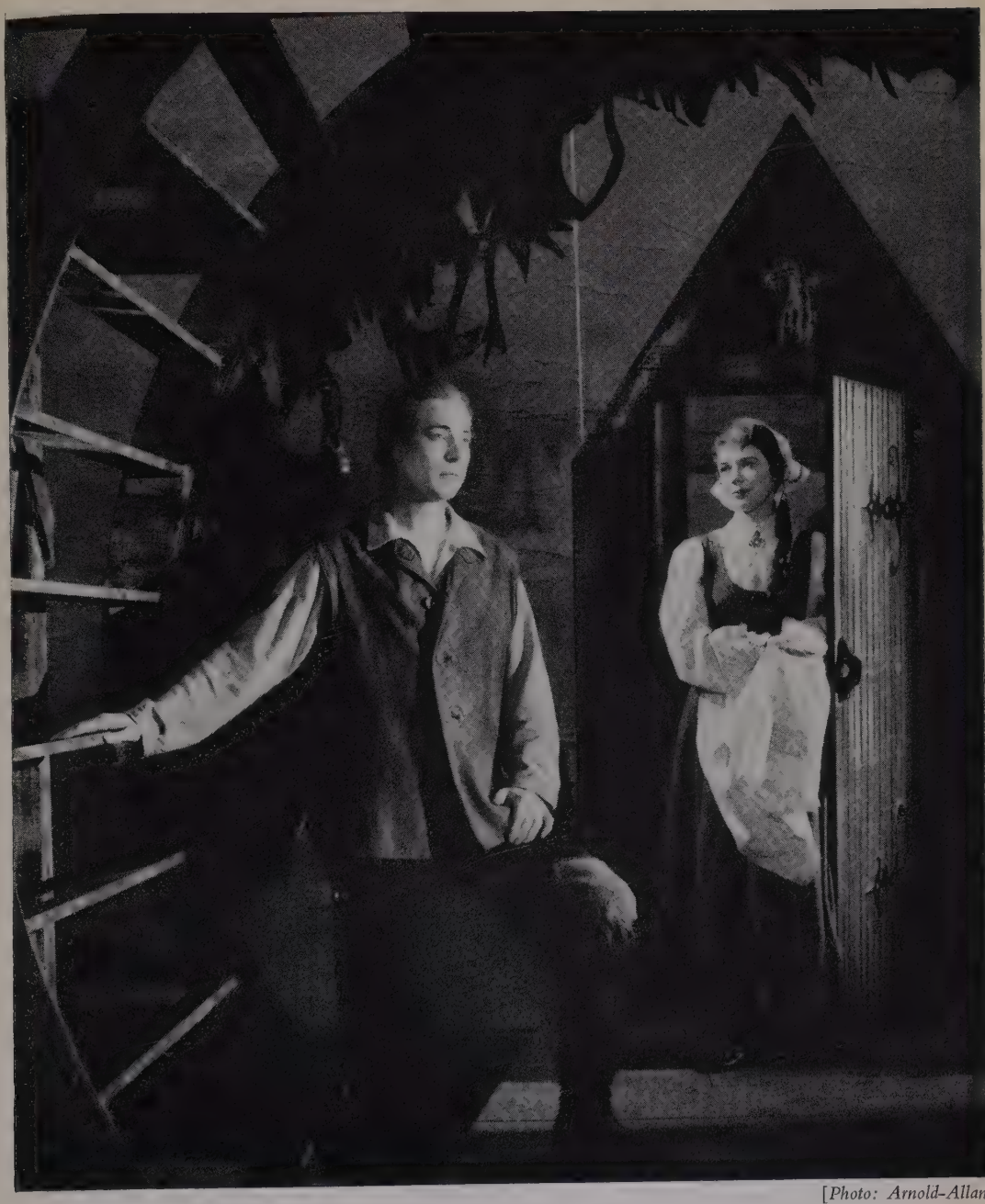
young. The amateur movement in the inter-war period was even more active and in some of its manifestations even more adventurous than elsewhere. This too was felt to be not enough. But it did produce at any rate sufficient people with a broad enough sense of theatre to take the lead in the demand for a professional theatre to give them the type of drama in which they had become interested.

The problem, as always, was the bricks-and-mortar one. In the last days of the war an unofficial civic theatre committee was set up, which prepared a report to the then City Council asking for a civic theatre as part of Nottingham's post-war plan. The report was detailed and practical and modestly proposed the conversion of an existing hall as an interim measure, but it was returned almost scornfully within a week. This was in the halcyon days of post-war dreams and post-war planning and not the least significant feature of the present Nottingham decision is that it dates not from that period but from the sterner days of the late nineteen fifties—and of the credit squeeze.

In 1948 the chance came when a small cinema in a good central position became available. It had housed weekly repertory for a few years under various regimes. Nottingham Theatre Trust Limited was formed on the usual non-profit distributing pattern with some locally raised and some Arts Council money and, perhaps even more important, Arts Council guidance, from the first. Its members consisted of individuals from the old civic theatre committee, representatives of the University and the Education Authorities and people interested in the arts generally in Nottingham. It seemed in many ways a model set-up, and it worked. A Director of Productions was appointed in André Van Gyseghem and in three years he had firmly established the theatre in reputation and audience response. He was followed by John Harrison for five years and Val May, the present Director, has been there for two. They have produced three in four of the plays, engaged the companies and, subject to the Board's supervision, have chosen the programmes and planned the theatre's policy. In other words, this has been a producer-run theatre and the young men who have held office have had to shoulder a weight of responsibility indeed. The pace has at times been almost killing. In type of programme, and achievement in performance, the standard aimed at was that of Bristol and Birmingham. The resources—in time (fortnightly change), in money, in size of staff and above all in the very limited building—were much less. The stage has a depth of only twelve feet from the setting-line, the wing space on one side is four feet, the dressing-rooms are airless cubbyholes under the stage, the auditorium seats 467, there is no licensed bar and practically no circulation space and the noise of street traffic drowns the actors. Nevertheless, this theatre quickly won audiences which remained at 65 to 70 per cent of capacity over the year until about eighteen months ago. The holding of them was a continuous worry, and Arts Council subsidy had to be increased, but an adventurous policy was persisted in and the audience response was there.

One further fact about the Nottingham Playhouse is interesting in itself and, of course, weighed with the Corporation when they came to make their decision. No theatre in the country has done more for children and young audiences. Here there was already a link of real value with the Civic Authority because for the past ten years, six plays a year have been performed at special matinées with the house bought (at a reduced rate) for children of the City and County schools. Six of these matinée performances were given for each play and a large proportion of the younger generation have therefore been brought into contact with the Playhouse as schoolchildren and some of them have returned and become regular members of the audience after leaving school. Other help has been given, too, under a "Service of Youth" scheme for parties from youth clubs and juvenile organizations whose visits have been

Mise-en-scène



[*Photo: Arnold-Allan*

James Cossins in the title role and Anna Cropper as Solveïg in Val May's production of Ibsen's "Peer Gynt" at The Playhouse, Nottingham. This production was later taken by the Company to The Oxford Playhouse.

[Photo. P. W. A. L. Thompson

A scene from Clifford Williams' production of Shaw's "Major Barbara" at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry, September, 1958. The set is designed by John Bury and from left to right the players are: Rhoda Lewis, Alan Howard, Richard Martin, Margo Jenkins, Robert Meridi[illegible], Cherry Morris, John Bingham

[*Photo: Desmond Tripp*

John Hale's production of "Cyrano de Bergerac" was performed by the Bristol Old Vic Theatre Company last season at the Theatre Royal. The scene from the second act shows Peter Wyngarde as Cyrano confronting his rival, de Guiche, played by Peter Jeffrey, with his friend, le Bret, played by John Woodvine. In contrast with the Mermaid, which is the newest, the Theatre Royal is the oldest playhouse in England.

[*Photo: Fox Photos*

The first production at Bernard Miles' new playhouse, The Mermaid Theatre in Puddle Dock, the City of London, is "Lock Up Your Daughters", a musical adaptation of Fielding's comedy, "Rape Upon Rape". It is produced by Peter Coe. The actors in this scene are ABOVE: *Frederick Jaegar as Ramble and Hy Hazell as Mrs. Squeezum.* BELOW: *Richard Wordsworth as Justice Squeezum and Stephanie Voss as Hilaret.*

subsidized to some extent from Education Committee funds. Furthermore, the County Authority have sponsored year by year a tour by a second specially formed company of a play performed in towns in the north of the County.

Once again, then, the problem was the bricks-and-mortar one. When the Theatre Trust made their application to the Corporation two years ago, they were able to say with full conviction that unless a better building were provided either in the shape of a reconstruction of the present premises or conversion of an existing building elsewhere, all that had been built up would quickly vanish. The worry was not simply that the work could only be carried on with increasing subsidy, but that there were already signs that audiences were beginning to decline. Television, and particularly the coming of commercial television, was having its effect. A theatre these days would appear to have to offer a sense of occasion and a night out in an attractive place. A good play well performed by a regular company is no longer enough. It was possible to point to the success of those few repertory theatres which had adequate buildings, notably Liverpool and the reconstructed Sheffield Playhouse. The success of the Belgrade at Coventry speaks even more eloquently on this point.

The Corporation were also informed of the architect's and quantity surveyor's estimates of the cost of reconstructing the present building with the addition of some property at the back. This was in the region of £100,000. The Corporation considered this possibility and the alternatives of converting other local cinemas, some of which were falling empty, or halls in central positions. It was clear that the cost of doing this was disproportionate to the cost of a wholly new theatre. The Corporation owned property in a central position fronting a quiet square adjoining the City's main concert hall and only a few yards from the "bright lights" area. Happily, from this point of view, the tenancies affecting the property were short-term and even more happily the Corporation had had for years a fund invested with the idea that it might be spent on some exceptional project such as a concert hall. Most important of all, certain individuals, leaders of the Council and the Labour Party, and certain officials, were convinced that it was important for Nottingham to have its own theatre. Nottingham has a growing sense of itself as a regional capital, a university city and the centre of a densely populated area. A cultural asset of first-class calibre was needed. A full-scale orchestra would not be a possibility here. There was already the basis for a theatre of comparable standard and fame. There was also the belief that the small-scale living theatre in these days of the huge mass media could be something important in the life of the city.

The decision as to the architect was a vital one. The Corporation appointed Mr. Peter Moro, F.R.I.B.A., who was the Associate Architect for the Royal Festival Hall. The briefing has been done in close association with the theatre and enormous care has been taken to ensure that the building will be one which makes a contribution to theatre architecture nationally and internationally. The conception has been of a theatre appropriate to the needs of a large English city in the second half of the twentieth century when the pattern of theatrical life in this country is rapidly changing and when the techniques of playwriting and theatrical performance, hindered hitherto by the restrictions of existing theatre architecture, are changing also. The plans are now almost ready and final Civic approval of them is awaited. It is hoped that building will begin within a year. They embody the conception so well and justifiably publicized by Mr. Wanamaker in the New Shakespeare at Liverpool of a theatre to be used as a place of resort all day and for many purposes linked with, but distinct from, theatre-going as such. An art gallery, a restaurant and café, rooms for meetings, facilities for television transmission and for film shows are all there. The way in which theatre in this country, always dying but always

springing up afresh, will organize itself in the next few decades can as yet only dimly be seen. Will touring decline even further? Will repertory theatres become more flexible in their method of working with more interchange and the undertaking of touring responsibilities themselves? Will a repertoire system at last come into being? All these possibilities and others are there and they have been borne in mind as the new Nottingham Playhouse has been designed.

The building of the Belgrade at Coventry was a portent. It might have remained an isolated event. The Nottingham decision suggests otherwise. One may regret the political controversy which locally preceded and indeed still follows that decision. On the other hand, here was an artistic project suddenly occupying the centre of the stage at several municipal elections. Here was a political party daring to put the proposal for a theatre in the forefront of its programme and, let it be recorded, without disastrous results at the polls. Those concerned for the future of the theatre in this country, whatever their political views, may admire that piece of bravery.

University Drama: A Discussion

[SUSAN ENGEL, PHILIP ANTONY and EDWARD ARGENT are actors; SUSAN ENGEL and JANE HOWELL are graduates of the Drama Department, University of Bristol, in which GEORGE BRANDT is a lecturer.]

CHAIRMAN: In a recent letter to *The Sunday Times*, the principal of LAMDA says of the university students that come to him, "by the over-stimulation of their intellects at the expense of other faculties, their energies seem to turn too easily to destructive criticism of each other and sometimes of themselves." Does the panel agree that the approach of the university student to acting is too intellectual?

GEORGE BRANDT: Why this mystique of the university actor? The professional actor has an absolutely mythical concept of what goes on in a university; a concept of great brains rendered immobile by their own weight. I have rarely been overwhelmed by the intellectuality of my charges. If anything, there is too little, not too much, thought in university acting. As for destructive self-criticism: just consider the critical news-sheet published by the students here at Bristol who are taking the drama course at the university. What is the reaction among the students who are criticized in it? Howls of despair, because they can't take criticism. Nor do students in general criticize each other honestly. The people with no talent too often hide behind a protective "intellectualism". Genuine thoughtfulness inhibiting university actors is something I personally have very little knowledge of.

SUSAN ENGEL: Of course, there is no such thing as "over-stimulation" of the intellect. If you have an intellect—fine. But the use of your mind need never make you forget you have other things to use as well.

EDWARD ARGENT: Surely you can approach too intellectually; but you can't approach too intelligently! By intellectually I mean that you can get bogged down in textual research, and interpret the footnotes at the expense of the characterization. In the professional theatre we don't have enough time for this sort of intellectual approach.

GEORGE BRANDT: In the university we have the time: but only very rarely is any textual research done. The bulk of university acting is just bad professional acting. If there were a difference in approach it might be a fruitful thing: both sides would learn from each other. But as it is, the university echoes the commercial cry of The Show Must Go On. And indeed the show does go on, but without the stiffening of the technical knowhow of the professional theatre. What a mistake to assume that there is too much textual research in university acting—the students don't even read their parts properly.

EDWARD ARGENT: What a shame if they merely repeat the mistakes of the professional stage. And especially in Bristol, which is the only university to have a Drama Department. Here is the chance to relax, to learn, and to experiment.

GEORGE BRANDT: The chance, yes! But is the chance used? We have never been able to produce in students the frame of mind in which they would be prepared to take six months just to discover things, without worrying overmuch about the audience reaction at the end of that period. For instance there is ample room for an experimental commedia/mime group. But unhappily, all the students want is to put on show after show, and to recover enough money each time to finance the next show. Genuine practical research would produce most useful results—but in practice this happens hardly at all.

CHAIRMAN: Where then are the economic sanctions? Can any drama group either in this or any other university in fact go broke?

JANE HOWELL: Yes, it is possible.

GEORGE BRANDT: But never disastrous.

PHILIP ANTONY: Then you feel that it would be much better if there was a stricter financial sanction?

GEORGE BRANDT: No, not necessarily. But if people for one year would hide their lights under a bushel instead of exhibiting themselves time and again in mediocre performances of under-rehearsed plays, then at the end they would emerge as better actors and better people of the theatre.

PHILIP ANTONY: Why have the students not had the imagination to think of such a thing for themselves? And what makes you think that they can learn more by working on one play rather than on ten?

GEORGE BRANDT: Because all the vices of fortnightly rep. are reproduced in university performances where time is the one commodity that could be exploited. As it is, the half-baked productions spoil the personality and teach only the most superficial technique.

PHILIP ANTONY: But could university students actually use a year? I know I couldn't have done.

GEORGE BRANDT: I've seen many shows in which after six weeks of playing around the actors didn't even know their lines.

PHILIP ANTONY: That was because they didn't use the time they had properly, rather than that there wasn't enough time. Efficiency in the use of time is everything; one can reach a point of saturation.

GEORGE BRANDT: You are talking about working on a play; but it is in a project such as a commedia group that time is the most valuable commodity.

EDWARD ARGENT: Then what is the aim of your drama course at the Department of Drama? If to send people into the professional theatre, your ideal of time is going to trip them up.

SUSAN ENGEL: Is the Department intended, in any way for professionals?

GEORGE BRANDT: The Department has produced one or two professional actors—but that is by the way. As regards the question of time, we wish above all to avoid the pitfalls of the commercial theatre.

SUSAN ENGEL: But there is no theatre other than the commercial theatre for university drama to look to as a lodestone. University and Professional have to link somehow: if the university theatre cuts itself off from the professional theatre it entirely loses its point.

GEORGE BRANDT: I profoundly and categorically disagree with you. What is wrong with

the commercial theatre is not so much the actual conditions, but the lack of fanatical opposition to these conditions. English artists are not given a chance, nor stretched to the limit of their abilities. Commercialism and the lack of a subsidized theatre are creating impossible artistic conditions. We must teach people not to accept this.

EDWARD ARGENT: The only people worth the while teaching this fanaticism are millionaires and governments.

GEORGE BRANDT: And audiences.

PHILIP ANTONY: All audiences can do is to stop going.

GEORGE BRANDT: In their millions.

PHILIP ANTONY: And if every student in every university was filled with fanaticism to-morrow it would not make the slightest difference.

GEORGE BRANDT: I should have thought that it would have changed the position within a year.

CHAIRMAN: To pass on to the next question "On what grounds do university dramatic societies here in Bristol for instance justify and exhort the general public to attend their own productions in the same financial context as professional productions at the Theatre Royal or the Little Theatre?"

GEORGE BRANDT: Student drama should either be better or different than professional drama. One of these alternatives is its justification. It should not be directly competitive at all. The Department of Drama here at the university never has any difficulty in filling the Studio for a week if necessary, not because of good presentation, but because what it offers is different. The University of Bristol Dramatic Society up the road at the Union, even though it does good shows, fails to attract large audiences because it has a habit of limping behind the professional theatre with a time lag of five to twenty years

CHAIRMAN: The fascination and difference of the Department of Drama's Studio surely lies in its form of presentation, its "machine for acting", rather than in the actual material presented?

EDWARD ARGENT: There is this same feeling in the theatre now that we must vary our type of stage. This will be the proper way to fight—although fight is the wrong word—the cinema and TV. We've got to come out of the stage, and nearer, into, and around the audience.

CHAIRMAN: Then it is not so much the plays themselves as the manner of production that is the justification for university dramatic society productions. This seems to raise another question that we have on the list: "Should not one of the primary duties of university drama be to bring before the public plays that would not otherwise be shown?"

SUSAN ENGEL: Obviously the unearthing of recherché plays for unearthing's sake is useless. And many of the plays that were interesting in their time can not now be touched by the professional theatre for obvious box-office reasons.

EDWARD ARGENT: Nevertheless, there are many exceptions to this: *Titus Andronicus, The Cenci, Mary Stuart. . . .*

SUSAN ENGEL: But too much energy frequently goes into what is basically not worth doing.

GEORGE BRANDT: University dramatic societies all over the country try to discover new plays, or uncover old ones. Obviously the failure rate is very high: but I think it is a step in the right direction. If you get one success to nine failures you are doing all right.

CHAIRMAN: And what do you consider to be a success by university standards?

GEORGE BRANDT: It must justify itself in performance. And if on its own level, it is right on top of it, that is to say that it is performed in a small hall for three nights, and people go away feeling enriched somehow, then that is a success.

CHAIRMAN: Does the panel consider that stage production can be taught in a university context?

EDWARD ARGENT: I wouldn't say that it can be taught at all. You must have a special temperament for it, much rarer than for acting; and a sort that is adaptable to learning by working in

the theatre. It is far too responsible a job to be susceptible to mere teaching.

JANE HOWELL: But you can get a grounding in the rudiments in a university context: you can learn the basic things. You will learn to handle actors and everything about the theatre building; and these materials, both human and inanimate, are concentrated at the schools and universities.

GEORGE BRANDT: Parallel it with the orchestra. You might just as well say that there is no point in a conductor ever going to a conservatory. Neither musicians nor actors are basically creative personalities—they are interpretive. The great interpreter has the gift of God within his bosom, which may be fine for him, and which cannot be taught or learnt. But the secondary things of production must be taught and learnt.

EDWARD ARGENT: The analogy is perhaps acceptable: but it brings us back to our university prodigies. At the moment the theatre is suffering from amateur producers straight from university; and are they amateur! Because of the few who have some sort of genius, there are many incompetent young men who are getting jobs as producers in rep., and there is quite a deal of ill-feeling among actors who have had them set over their heads. Competence is the one thing that could be taught in a university. But these new arrivals from the university do not seem to have learnt it there.

PHILIP ANTONY: Let us look at it in this way: if a producer cannot learn something of his job at a university, where can he learn it? Even so, the main difficulty with university producers is not that they have been to university, but that so often they haven't been anywhere else.

SUSAN ENGEL: But where better than in a university community can a producer learn? Undoubtedly in weekly rep. . . .

PHILIP ANTONY: But all you learn in rep. is what happens in the last three days of a production. You discover short cuts and gimmicks. You learn a lot; but after eight weeks you are fagged out; and you have learned superficialities, not genuine creative working.

GEORGE BRANDT: Let us draw on our experience in the Department of Drama of production students. Among our students are many American graduates, some of whom are academically trained producers: and when they spring into action they really deliver the goods. I put the creative aspect of a university training pretty low on the list. The main facility of such a course is that it provides a useful forum for comparisons. It allows knowledge which otherwise must be mastered slowly and painfully to be acquired in one fell swoop. And the students are able to make their initial mistakes not at the expense of the general public or the long-suffering professional actor whose career is always capable of being jeopardized by an incompetent producer. So at the end of such a course a graduate is not a producer, but he is at least in the way to becoming a producer.

CHAIRMAN: At this juncture, I would like to ask Miss Engel and Miss Howell, who are both on the professional stage, what are the things at university that have been of most value to you?

JANE HOWELL: The university's value for me was that it initially stimulated my interest in production. Unless I had come here, I would not have realized so soon, if at all, that I wished to produce. You see, someone dropped out of a production, and I dropped in.

SUSAN ENGEL: I have no more complicated an answer than to say that I emerged three years older. A university is an ideal atmosphere to grow older in. This makes the place sound a bit like a home for the aged; but, *sans blague*, the university does age one. However, I think that a drama school is of more value to someone who intends to be a professional actor.

CHAIRMAN: I can't help thinking personally that a drama department at a university is also for someone who is not straight from school. And now our final question: Does the panel consider that a magazine issued from a university would have any value to the professional theatre?

EDWARD ARGENT: I would welcome it myself; and it should be very valuable. The first reason is that there is not anything like it already in existence. And secondly, in too many repertory companies there is this terrible inferiority complex. "We don't bother about art or any of that intellectual stuff. We just get on with our job, and mark time until we are carried away by some angel to the West End." This is infuriating since with just a bit more proper pride, provincial reps could be so much more vital. And a magazine could be an ideal instrument to reinstate this proper pride.

PHILIP ANTONY: But surely the reason for this mass inferiority complex among the reps. is precisely because they are inferior. Of their actors, however much rehearsal they are given, nine out of ten are not only unimaginative but incompetent. I'm not saying that the whole of the English stage is untalented; but certainly we work too hard and too long. In most reps. the conditions and attitudes to work can only be compared to slave labour.

SUSAN ENGEL: Since your projected magazine will concentrate mainly on the theatre outside London, I think its peculiar use will be its ability to serve as a contact between rep. and rep.—to co-ordinate provincial thinking.

CHAIRMAN: What sort of things, then, would you like to see discussed in its pages?

JANE HOWELL: Criticisms between the reps. Perhaps something like *The Stage* but exclusively provincial.

EDWARD ARGENT: It would be a waste if such a magazine were to provide merely news after the manner of *The Stage*.

PHILIP ANTONY: Perhaps it should be more like *Encore*, which is supposed to be something to improve the theatre.

GEORGE BRANDT: *Encore*, inasmuch as it is the "voice of vital theatre", is the voice of vital metropolitan theatre alone.

PHILIP ANTONY: Agreed: but I don't think that rep. is some different animal. All theatre is theatre whether it is in the metropolis or the provinces.

EDWARD ARGENT: But the conditions of the London theatre are so utterly different as to make the reps. and the London theatres two totally different worlds. They both have entirely different problems and different evils.

PHILIP ANTONY: Even so, why leave out London? Some quite exciting things happen there you know.

CHAIRMAN: Perhaps it is our purpose to be able to show that interesting and exciting things are still happening outside London. Whether we can fulfil it will depend upon the reps. and the universities; of that, at least, there can be no doubt.

The Arts Council and Theatre Finance

JOHN MOODY

[JOHN MOODY. Former Chairman of the Drama Panel, Arts Council of Great Britain, and until recently Director of the Bristol Old Vic Company.]

IN this country the idea that the theatre should be subsidized has only existed since 1942, although the Old Vic and the London Zoo did get indirect subsidy by Entertainment Tax exemption before the last war. In fact, from the time when Entertainment Tax was imposed in World War I, until last year, the "Entertainment Industry", which included the theatre, was expected not only to support itself, but the country, to the tune of 14 per cent of its takings.

And still basically the same attitude exists today with a large section of the populace. Any new idea in this country takes at least twenty-five years to be accepted: public libraries and art galleries took longer to get their subsidies, so I suppose we must not be too impatient about the theatre. As a result of this attitude the Arts Council of Great Britain, appointed and supported by, but not controlled by the Treasury, have had to use empirical methods of subsidizing the theatre, while they were discovering the most effective use for the extremely inadequate finances they had at their disposal.

Broadly speaking their policy has been to support in the metropolis a big institution (in drama, the Old Vic) in each of the arts, together with one or two "advanced" or "experimental" bodies, in order to set a standard; and to spread the rest of their money over deserving provincial bodies—in the case of drama, the repertory theatres and small touring companies.

About 1950 the Council decided that with such small resources, for the future of the theatre, quality was more important than quantity. The wide spread of drama covered by the smaller touring companies was gradually dropped and subsidy given to bring some of that public by 'bus to the larger repertories, which were being developed with larger grants.

The Promotion of New Drama has been a long term investment which is beginning to bear fruit. It has taken the form of bursaries to playwrights, and guarantees against loss to repertory companies producing new plays: the latter form appears to be particularly valuable, as it provides a market for the playwright: a new play in the provinces generally loses money unless the management can afford London stars.

The Council's apportionment of grants for 1957-8 was approximately as follows:

London:	
The Old Vic	£20,000
Royal Court Theatre, Theatre Workshop and Open Air Theatre	£7,000
Provinces:	
5 larger Reps. (Birmingham, Bristol, Nottingham, Coventry and Oxford) ..	£20,000
17 smaller Reps. and touring companies	£14,500
Promotion of new drama. Exchange of companies and sundries	£6,500

Compare the actual total for Drama (£69,692) with the scale of subsidy elsewhere. The drama for the whole of England and Wales, including London, is less than what a small city like Zurich —about the size of Bristol—pays to its Playhouse; and that is in addition to what it pays for a full-time Opera House. The basic financial trouble here is that there is not enough money available to keep up the standard that we should have outside London. The provinces which ought to provide the powerful backbone of the British theatre, are often thought of by the public as very poor relations of the London

theatre—in fact almost as amateurs. Here is a very apt quotation from a broadcast by Lord Keynes, the begetter of C.E.M.A. and the Arts Council, in 1945: "How satisfactory it would be if different parts of this country would walk again their several ways—as they once did—and learn to develop something different from their neighbours, and characteristic of themselves. Nothing can be more damaging than the excessive prestige of metropolitan standards and fashions."

What of the future—especially if more money should be forthcoming: Are we spending it in the most productive way? So far it has mostly been used to keep a variety of theatres alive. But haven't we reached a point where the theatre outside London needs a basic overhaul? To compete with T.V. and other forms of entertainment it must produce something more exciting than they do, something which will appeal especially to a younger public, who are far better off now than many of their elders. For too long we have been turning out the same type of goods in the same old way to the same old customers and that is death to any business let alone to an art.

The problem is not just how to keep theatres open for the next few months, but how to rejuvenate the theatre for the next ten years. There is justification for subsidizing seats if the public are clamouring to see a programme but cannot afford the high price of seats. But theatres that have empty seats for worthy plays that are too dull to attract a lively public, and who do nothing about finding a new public, have no claim for subsidy. Too many theatres have depended for too long on repeating West End successes without adding enough creative ideas of their own, and with the dearth of West End successes, they have been hard hit. To inject life into the theatre the Arts Council should start by gearing up the repertory theatres in the big provincial cities. Such theatres' scale of operations ought to be bigger and more impressive: they should not be patronized as "the promising young repertory company" but should be full blown municipal theatres that compete with London theatres. Now that touring is almost dying out this is more possible. In fact such theatres should be able to include taking in a limited number of tours as part of their programme. The personnel and the actors all need to be geared up too.

To get lively creative work out of such theatres I would put the financial priorities in this order.

1. Capital for the building. There is no greater attraction than an exciting new building (like the Belgrade, Coventry) or a complete face-lift for an interior (like Sheffield). Unless the building is exciting the scale of the operation will never be large enough. It should of course include, too, proper workshops, stores and a restaurant.

2. Sufficient staff, at the level that produces:

(*a*) The ideas: and develops new authors, actors and directors;

(*b*) The salesmanship of the programme, and the bringing in of a new public. This is still a weak point in many theatres.

At present there is usually only one man who is expected to produce all the ideas—the theatre director. He is expected to administer the theatre, sell it to the public, find and read plays and reconstruct new ones, find the actors and direct a lot of the plays himself. The usual result is that none of these jobs are done half as well as they might be if more imaginative energy were pumped into a theatre by spreading that load over more people. I'm convinced by the results in continental theatres that it would pay dividends. More emphasis on original thought for long term growth rather than on quick returns on the old pattern is what the theatre needs.

(*c*) Higher salaries to leading actors. A London star's salary is 10 per cent of the total takings. In repertory he is lucky if he gets a fifteenth of that: it hardly pays his out-of-pocket expenses. We must stop

treating the people we need to attract the public to the theatre as if they were performing for charity. It makes it seem so amateur.

If a few large repertory companies could be made to appear as adults, instead of as promising youngsters, and measure up to West End weight, with the added advantage of having long term policies where imaginative work could develop, the effect would be to raise the whole prestige of the provincial theatre including the smaller companies. And through the success of even one such company, it may be possible to convince the State and the local authorities that it is worth investing money in the theatre outside London, because that is where the theatre must have its roots.

JOHN MOODY.

Repertory: A Discussion

DRAMA STUDIO
UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

[BRYAN BAILEY, Director, The Belgrade Theatre, Coventry; NAT BRENNER, General Manager, Theatre Royal, Bristol; PROFESSOR H. D. F. KITTO; DR. B. L. JOSEPH; DR. GLYNNE WICKHAM (Chairman).]

WICKHAM: *New Theatre Magazine* is an attempt to bring together all the effort and enterprise of the provincial repertory theatres and to make it vocal. One step in that direction is to find out some of the things about which such a magazine should be vocal. And it is primarily this which we hope to discuss this afternoon. So I shall start away by posing this question:

English repertory is essentially different from continental repertory. The latter means five or six shows—sometimes more—all mounted more or less together and played in rotation through a long season. In English repertory—a play is put on and then dropped after a short run, when another play is presented, and so on. Very well, then, what should the repertory of repertory be? Mr. Brenner? Mr. Bailey?

BAILEY: It might seem an admirable thing to some people if repertory theatres could exist in a sort of vacuum, remote from the stress imposed by physical and financial necessities. But even as an exercise such a state of affairs would soon pall.

It is an interesting fact that at the outset in Coventry no arbitrary decision was taken that the Belgrade should be a repertory theatre: I defined a certain policy for the Trust and that policy was accepted.

Now, I simply do not believe that you can choose a programme of plays by committee. To be effective, any programme must represent one person's standards, tastes, and policy. A director will of course seek advice, but he must approach his Board—which is his legal authority—primarily as an expert whose opinions are valued as those of an expert. His attitude will inevitably be conditioned by his training and personality, but he must learn to accommodate all this to physical problems, principally to the limitations of finance. This, I feel, is a good thing. No theatre should serve one narrow aim,one narrow approach to drama. However, the individual must make his concessions in full knowledge that he is aiming at a particular audience requirement. And above all else he must aim at training his audience—I emphasize this point—at *training* his audience ultimately to accept plays of the widest possible range.

BRENNER: The continental repertoire system has one outstanding advantage. In the course of

these rotating nightly presentations, you can slip into the programme esoteric plays which appeal only to a tiny minority. You can, for instance, use a hundred performances of *Romeo and Juliet* to subsidize one of a Greek play of very limited appeal. Thus you can cater for the tastes of various minority groups.

Continental repertory, however, is a self-contained world demanding huge workshops and storage rooms and a numerous staff. In English repertory, costumes, for instance, are obtained on short-term hire. In continental repertory you must accumulate a full wardrobe and all the props necessary to all your plays for at least a year. The expense is staggering. At the theatre in Hamburg they have a staff of 200 and a subsidy of a quarter of a million! And the shows mounted there are about the equivalent of the London Old Vic at its best.

WICKHAM: It is a fact that the London Old Vic does operate the repertoire system, and that the Bristol Old Vic does not. Would you illustrate your point in this very special context?

BRENNER: The London Old Vic elected some years ago to operate the repertoire system because in the first place it is an extremely civilized thing to do. People who pay only a short visit to London can thus still see several plays. Secondly the theatre can exploit its successes, and it can (as I have already pointed out) make its more popular successes pay for its more esoteric productions. But then the London Old Vic has much more money, space, and audience-potential than we have at the Theatre Royal in Bristol. This matter of audience-potential is a vital one: in England you are fortunate if 5 per cent of the population go to the theatre except at special times—such as Christmas, or for special productions. On the continent, however, the percentage is much higher. The average provincial repertory theatre in this country therefore simply does not have the resources in terms of either audience-potential, money, or accommodation to do anything other than operate what you have called the English repertory system. Repertoire is quite out of the question . . .

BAILEY: . . . And more than this. The whole pattern of employment in the theatrical profession here works against the adoption of the continental system. Nor would you find your audiences ready to accept a new pattern of playgoing—though in this respect we do attempt to keep a degree of flexibility at the Belgrade. Basically, our plays change once a fortnight, but we vary this occasionally to a one week or three weeks' run. We are thus trying not to allow our audience to become too habituated to a set pattern of playgoing.

WICKHAM: May we now return to Bailey's first point—to this question of a single artistic and administrative direction?

BRENNER: In the end, certainly, one man must go it alone. And provided that his tastes reflect those of his audience, it will probably work out very well for him. By all means seek advice: the theatre is above all other arts a co-operative venture. When I see the words "splendidly acted" or "well produced" or "beautifully mounted" in a critique, I always marvel that critics are so easily able to distinguish between the components of a production. How can they readily determine which has contributed most to the presentation, or how far whatever result is achieved may be fortuitous? In the long run—in the very long run—you might be able to evaluate splendid acting or splendid direction, but how these can usefully be made the subjects of a snap-judgment eludes me.

WICKHAM: This, surely, has some bearing on Bailey's second point—the external factors working on a director. What, in your experience, are the most serious of these external factors?

BRENNER: First, making ends meet within the framework of one's own particular budget. You can lose a lot of money for the sake of prestige: success can be your ruin. Of course, you reap a certain harvest of goodwill sown by prestige productions, but prestige is not enough to make ends meet. Professionals working for non-

profit-making companies often have great difficulty in avoiding the production of masterpieces—dear to the hearts of certain specialized groups—that would simply shut them down in a year. You must stay solvent, if only because the English system on the whole does not take kindly to giving money to the theatre. Happily this situation is now improving as a result of small subsidies.

WICKHAM: Considered from an academic standpoint, can either you, Kitto, or you, Joseph, see why the theatre should be subsidized?

JOSEPH: I should like to digress for a moment. In order to continue with prestige productions, could you not reduce your losses and obviate the need for subsidy by giving twice nightly performances?

BRENNER: Most certainly not! A law should be passed against twice nightly performances.

JOSEPH: I have known an actor play *Macbeth* twice nightly. I've known a soprano sing *Dido* twice nightly.

BRENNER: As a stunt perhaps. But you just cannot work actors like this. You cannot get a *performance* twice nightly, that is the point. What you inevitably end up with is one performance and one walk-through. This even tends to happen when you are playing matinées. Some actors, I know, possess enormous physical resources, but twice-nightly playing calls for energy of a very special order and is disastrous artistically.

JOSEPH: But, I repeat, consider what singers can do.

BRENNER: Singers are protected contractually against overwork in the first place. In the second, they do not have to work so hard as actors—this is, in fact, one of the difficulties attendant on the running of an opera house today. And remember, the repertory actor has forty-four weeks' work in the year to tackle.

KITTO: May I go back to Mr. Bailey's comment that the repertory theatre cannot exist in a vacuum? Surely—setting aside all questions of finance and physical difficulty—the chief objection to such a theatre, if it did exist, would be that it was not doing its job by the community. Such a theatre would destroy itself. The financial sanction is therefore an important one in that it stops the theatre from cutting itself away from reality and becoming precious and silly. This links up with a later point of Mr. Bailey's—the one about educating the audience. Isn't there a stimulating parallel here in the policy of Henry Wood when he started the Proms? When he took over, musical taste at large was abysmal; but from extremely mixed programmes Henry Wood finally developed an audience in London that would cheerfully go to an all Beethoven night, or—what was more surprising—to an all Bach!

WICKHAM: There seems to be agreement then that if the director fails to supply his audience with the fare he thinks they want and gives them instead what he thinks they ought to want—the theatre will fail to fulfil its function in society by no longer representing the community. How then do you reconcile the view that in London there have for some time been "committed" theatres? I think one could fairly describe the Royal Court as a committed theatre. Unity was committed. Theatre Workshop is committed. The Whitehall is committed. . . . Is there a place in the provinces for committed theatres of this kind?

BAILEY: No. No provincial city could possibly support one. And committed theatres tend to bring very grave problems upon themselves. So far as so-called "people's theatres" are concerned, they suffer from the defect that "the people"—as they think and speak of them—are rarely to be found in their audience! And now I want to make and emphasize a crucial point: intellectualization of the theatre is apt to produce a failure among specialized groups to support the living theatre as it exists *now*—but the theatre must be supported as it exists now if it is to get better in the future. In Coventry, for instance, a group of young people—enterprising, well-educated and

vocal—have turned their backs almost completely on the Belgrade simply because we have —quite intentionally—produced only two plays by Shaw and one by Shakespeare. Such groups are doing the community a disservice and they are forcing problems on to the shoulders of our profession that we might well be spared. Such an attitude shows a real lack of responsibility and good sense.

WICKHAM: Precisely the same difficulty was experienced for a very long time at the Oxford Playhouse.

BAILEY: And at the Arts Theatre, Cambridge.

KITTO: Surely the existence of committed theatre in London indicates that London is so big and so amorphous as not to be a community at all? The committed theatre, in itself, is a symbol of that disastrous fragmentation of our modern society which produces first the isolation of young people and then their divorce from society at large.

WICKHAM: What about the many young men and women who criticize the Theatre loudly —yet do not support it?

BRENNER: The difficulty is that when young people do come to see a play, that is all they do—they do not come to the theatre. They rather seek some response to a personal requirement. But we need people to support the playhouse as the thing to do. We need the subsidy of their presence as an audience, we need them as habitual playgoers. As for the average university student, he does not go to the theatre at all. This surely suggests a basic flaw in the university system. The theatre should appeal essentially to those interested in the humanities; and, as the general level of instruction in the humanities is advanced, so the theatre will thrive.

WICKHAM: I must certainly come at once to the defence of departments outside those teaching the humanities, for it is from such departments that we receive the body of our support here in the Studio. Engineers, physicists, chemists—all these seem able to take theatre in their stride and find time to patronize it regularly.

KITTO: It's the same with music.

WICKHAM: In so far as the professional theatre is concerned, do you think that price concessions to students—after the continental fashion—would be any inducement?

BRENNER: The theatre, you know, is tremendously cheap. It has not even approximately increased its prices relative to the general rise in costs since the war. The classic example is the Manchester Opera House whose top price remains to-day what it was in 1901!

JOSEPH: Is this pride in cheapness possibly mistaken? Isn't the theatre undervalueing itself? And, if so, isn't this a direct invitation to the public to regard it as at least as shoddy a product as other things that are cheap.

BAILEY: I think you may be right.

JOSEPH: I have a business friend in Cardiff who has handed over money at the rate of £300 a month for years in an effort to save the Prince of Wales Theatre, with no more obvious result than a net loss of £1,500 and a theatre which is now closed! He says he thinks the theatre is no longer a fashionable way of spending a night out. I think the theatre is at least in part to blame by underpricing itself.

WICKHAM: Surely an important point here is that the theatre—as at present represented by Victorian buildings—has a class-stamp firmly set upon it: Gallery and Stalls. Such a theatre does not reflect the social revolution which has taken place in this country. Today's audiences have come to take a positive dislike of these outward and visible signs of class distinction. In its new buildings, hasn't the Belgrade got rid of them?

BAILEY: I agree entirely with Professor Kitto's remarks that the first duty of the theatre is to serve the community. The Belgrade, fortunately, contains amenities which virtually transform it into a social or community centre. And—most important of all—the new buildings have attracted teenagers from the outset. We ourselves, too, have gone out of our way to encourage teenagers to accept the theatre as part of living. Our Under Twenty Club has grown

to over 3,000 in the first year and the number of teenagers present in the theatre grows with every performance. The future of the theatre in this country is inextricably bound up with the provision of new buildings which will act also as community centres.

BRENNER: I think, though, that one should be careful here. In Bristol, for instance, while our audiences have doubled, the membership of the club has gone down. I think Bailey will find this, too. The sense of urgency and the interest both pass. I feel, Bailey, that the effect of your new buildings will wear off.

WICKHAM: But surely in Coventry the club is related to special social activities within the theatre? The club at the Theatre Royal is severely handicapped by lack of premises suitable for social events.

BAILEY: In Coventry there is a counterpart to the Bristol Playgoers' Club, but the Under Twenty Club is quite separate from this. I agree that the novelty value will fade. But I think that the interest of teenagers in the theatre will mushroom out. The modern schools in Coventry have young and go-ahead teachers who are really behind us, and my staff and I co-operate directly with them. Repertories have in the past woefully neglected the creation of audiences. Contact with the teenagers must be established before they leave school.

BRENNER: Is there not a danger of developing ancilliaries at the expense of the theatre? What happens on the stage must always be the final criterion. By all means help to build your audience by ancilliary activities, but—I repeat—it is what happens on the stage that counts in the last resort.

BAILEY: I am in complete agreement with you —who would not be? But you will, I think, also agree with me: repertory theatres must never in future omit to tackle this vital task of establishing an audience through a direct approach to youth.

NEW THEATRE MAGAZINE *will welcome letters from the Directors of Repertory Theatres, and from others interested, on points raised in this article or arising out of it. We will print selections from this correspondence in a future issue.*

Book Review: Delayed Action

The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht: by John Willett. Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1959, 272 pp. Illustrated. 36s.

Poking around in the subsoil of blitzed London, every once in a while we still come across the odd German block buster. No one panics, the area is sealed off, the bomb disposal boys come along and the offending object is removed with calm, cheerful efficiency. The same British sang-froid, the same admirable refusal to admit that anything out of the ordinary has happened, the same dogged determination to carry on with a minimum of fuss is also being shown in the face of another block buster, a mental one this time, from Germany—not the Germany of jackboots and swastikas but the once lavishly praised Other Germany. I mean of course the theatre of Bertolt Brecht, which has so far, some twenty, twenty-five, nay thirty years after the event, failed to have a shattering impact on English theatre either metropolitan or provincial. Damp indifference has taken the bang out of its explosive matter, and the familiar landscape remains, sane, reassuring and slightly dreary. A pity.

Of course, there was the visit of the Berliner Ensemble in '56, with a brief flurry of A-Effects

sparkling in the small-talk of theatrical long-hairs and jejune university practitioners ("Let's do a Brecht-type *Macbeth*—you know, madly alienated . . ."). Has it done any good? Or any harm? Probably not much of either. Brecht himself, an inveterate polemicist with a personal semi-kidding vocabulary, must take some of the blame for the ambiguities he has fathered. But after all, he was primarily a practitioner rather than a theorist. This fact has been somewhat obscured by the inadequate current English translations of his works. Also, there has not been a basic book on Brecht available in English so far. That defect is now remedied.

The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht does an admirable job, in spite of some minor linguistic lapses in its handling of German. At first blush it is not quite clear what readership Mr. Willett is aiming at: total novices or semi-initiates. The book does not read like an introduction to Brecht for those wholly innocent of any knowledge of his works. But then, what else is there, apart from some of Eric Bentley's writings? Although obviously some prior information will make the book twice as useful, it does in fact provide a jumping-off point for a journey into Brecht. Discreetly it gives the reader his bearings and works up an appetite in him for further exploration: precisely what scholarly criticism ought to do.

The organization of *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* (subtitled: "A study from eight aspects") is interestingly fresh. No biographical plodding here: the eight aspects—subject matter, language, theatrical influences, music, theatrical practice, theory, politics, and the English application of Brecht's work—are dealt with one after another in different chapters which can be read (and re-read) independently. Together with the excellent apparatus (chronology of Brecht's work, summary of his plays, an appendix which gives not only a bibliography but a list of films and recordings as well), the layout of the book makes it a useful work of reference. This aspect is strengthened by the 236 illustrations, skilfully chosen to illustrate Brecht's life and times as well as his work; unfortunately they bring the price way up out of the reach of the large potential of young readers with more mental zest than cash.

What emerges from Mr. Willett's study is Brecht as a creative personality—rich, contradictory, and capable of reconciling his contradictions by sheer creative vigour. Brecht was an unblushing plagiarist who had a creator's right to his pilferings: usually (though not invariably) he made his loot truly his own property. Mr. Willett does not gloss over the contradictions; indeed he shows them up. His chapter on theatrical influences on Brecht brings in not only the expected names and trends—Buchner, Reinhardt, Piscator, the Elizabethans, Japanese No—but also Wedekind, Meyerhold, Claudel, Pirandello. Once you think about them, these tie-ups make good sense; but ideologically they are a startling mixture.

Perhaps the most valuable part of the book, at least in its potential impact on the theatre in this country, is the final chapter. Here the author tries to break through to the essential Brecht, beyond all theories of acting and all gimmickries of production, in order to apply Brecht's lessons to the English scene. Brecht, he claims, is not so much the German ("Teutonic") Communist ("Stalinist") theoretician ("doctrinaire") of current folklore as a writer with surprisingly many English (and Irish) associations: the assimilator if not the disciple of Shakespeare, Marlowe, Webster, Farquhar, Gay and Synge. And his lesson? A fusion in theatrical terms of sound hard sense with economy and beauty: basically the discovery of an apt form and the restoration of significance to the theatre. To this one might add: the rediscovery of vitality. To Brecht, seriousness could be fun, indeed it could be funny (and still serious).

Altogether, *The Theatre of Bertolt Brecht* is eminently worth reading. There is a strong case to be made out for the publication of a cheaper edition.

G. W. BRANDT.

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